

## AN INTERRACIAL MOVEMENT OF THE POOR?

Some working notes by Carl Wittman and Tom Hayden

Increasingly today we hear the call for a movement of the American poor. The call is exciting to anyone who cares about democratic improvements in our way of life, and who remembers with nostalgia and some bitterness the achievements and failures of the populist and labor movements of earlier times. But under the excitement is a sense of vast difficulty, and an historical knowledge of the tragic conflicts between groups of the same class situation which have prevented more constructive conflicts between truly-opposed classes. Our comments here are meant to be incomplete and unpolished, a set of working notes for those in SDS and elsewhere who wonder about these problems as they work on them.

### I. The Negro Freedom Movement

Any discussion of the prospects for an interracial class movement should be with an assessment of what people in the Negro movement are doing and care to do.

In the South, especially the Black Belt South, the movement's most typical demand is for the elimination of explicit racial barriers to the opportunities which all other Americans have: the right to vote, travel, buy food, live where money permits, and work where one's skills are appropriate. The movement is conceived and led mostly by middle-class Negroes, specifically students, ministers, lawyers, housewives. But the increasing involvement of the urban unemployed and the sharecroppers is a sign that the movement, as constituted, is just as important to the Negro lower classes. The system which keeps a middle-class Negro from getting a good education or a job commensurate with his skills, simultaneously scrapes the lower-class Negro between a reign of terror and starvation wages. There seems to be substantial Negro class unity about program within the Southern movement. Where there are differences they occur along status lines, with the more moderate and tradition-bound Negro leaders being classified as Uncle Toms.

Among the many effects of this movement, there are four which are quite important for our exploration.

The first is that it provides impetus for Negroes elsewhere, and precipitates action even where the terror conditions are not present. We in the North become especially conscious of the instrumental value of the Southern movement when we try to initiate a similar movement among a minority without this heritage, e.g. Puerto Ricans. Although "freedom" in the South and the North has quite different meanings, the subjective identity which Negroes feel is perhaps the most valuable asset the Northern Negro movement has today.

The second is that the Southern movement, in a number and variety of ways, inspires greater commitment and greater activity from liberal institutions such as the churches and unions; it forces the government to legitimize, and

bles, and therefore speed up civil rights activity; it awakens conscientious individuals to the possibility of doing something right and effective. In general it shakes things up everywhere--and provides a model of commitment and action which challenges those who are taking it easy or looking for a way to focus their anxiety.

The third is that the movement dramatically raises political and economic issues of a fundamental importance for the whole society. The default of Congress, and the shortcomings of the private economy are just two of the issues which naturally become more pressing as the Negro struggle forces Americans to return to an examination of their way of life after many Cold War years of foreign preoccupations.

The fourth is that as the present Southern movement moves towards legal equality, which is beginning to happen in the urban areas and the upper rim of states, the way will be more open for the movement to consider new issues and make connections with the poor white population. This is not a mechanical one-two process, of course. Organizations like SNCC are already talking and programming on economic issues which are of deep concern to poor white as well as most Southern Negroes. And it is certainly possible to begin experiments in organizing whites into political alliances, if not deep personal associations, with the Negro community today, e.g. many miners in Hazard, Kentucky, are changing their stereotyped conceptions of the Negro as they become interested in expanding their movement across all of Appalachia, where many of the unemployed miners are Negro. However, it does seem generally true that the establishment of desegregation is the first priority, and developing an interracial movement is much less feasible. (In this context the present civil rights bill might be very important in speeding the desegregation process.)

As desegregation proceeds, what are the possibilities for alienation between the Negroes and their real or possible white allies? The areas of possible alienation are twofold: between Negroes and all whites, and between Negroes and poor whites.

In the first instance, there is a kind of black nationalism that works uneasily within the integration movement itself. In many organizations there are disputes and splits over the color of leadership; whether whites understand Negroes or Negroes, whites; whether whites, particularly white women, can be effective as organizers in Negro community. These issues are among the most sensitive and difficult we face, and undoubtedly they will continue for an indefinite period of time. We suspect, however, that the tension in the movement will not be resolved on the side of an official black nationalist ideology, partly because it has not happened yet between Negroes and whites in general even in the worst conditions of racist tyranny. Even were it to develop in some organized form, we would guess that at some future time the possibility of Negro-white alliances would reappear because a program based primarily on race will not improve the terrible social conditions which provide the impetus for the movement. A permanent alienation should not develop unless two groups continually interfere with the deepest economic interests of each for a sustained period of time. Even today if poor whites feel the threat of Negro sex potency, of Negro independence from them or of any other ideological or psychological estrangement, this might be of no consequence in the long run. As long as the Southern Negro does not directly threaten the white's livelihood by actually taking his job or destroying the

quality of the white child's education (and hence livelihood in this society) such estrangements are not permanent, and can end whenever whites clearly see it is in their economic interest to unite with the Negro. One clear example of this happened in Cambridge, Maryland. Six months of intensive race warfare over the issue of public accommodations\*referendum, with poor whites providing the core of segregationist action and opinion. Only a month later, however, the United Packinghouse Workers organized three locals in Cambridge, on a racially-integrated basis, with militant Negro leadership carefully avoiding anything which would upset the 40 percent white membership. After one of the locals was recognized, the victory party included dancing, drinking and eating in racially mixed company, previously taboo in the town, and occurred without incident. Without the movement, the Cambridge power structure could have defeated the union drive as it did in the past. The built-up alienation on the part of the poor whites was subordinated to a common interest which happened to be central to the lives of black and white factory workers.

Of course, we are aware that estrangement between the races can continue indefinitely, as it has in the South for a century. We are haunted not only by Southern history but by the problems dividing Muslims and Hindus in India, and Negroes and East Indians in British Guiana. But we remain convinced so far that permanent alienation can be avoided and overcome by a serious movement which fights for the interests of both groups. We know of almost no effort to organize in white communities in the South--and it would be foolish to be either optimistic or pessimistic until actual experiments are further underway. We need to know much more about the organizing problems faced by the Negro-white-Mexican coalition in Texas, and whether those problems are applicable to other areas of the South; we need to know much more about rank-and-file feelings within the white working class; we need to make contact with whatever radical individuals there are within the southern union bureaucracy. These needs are briefly mentioned here to suggest some gaps in our present knowledge; the implications for our proposed or actual organizing campaigns remain to be discussed in a later section of these comments.

We realize that much of the preceding can be applied directly to the northern civil rights situation, and that this is a symptom of the nationalization of the problem and the movement. Since the North is the place we generally work, however, there is need for a more detailed picture of trends.

Observed from the angle of current social alignments, the movement in the North seems directly pointed towards a difficult and violent period. As a movement it has developed very rapidly, with the mass base of support emanating from the metropolitan ghettos that run all across the northern rim of the country. There seem to be distinctive northern conditions which tend to make the protest movement immediately volatile in relation to the white community. These are first, the official but betrayed policies of non-discrimination; second, the change of the North into a "treadmill" instead of a "ladder", due to the automation of traditional low-skill work; the Greater isolation of the ghetto-dwelling Negro from the world of white people. These seem to be conditions conducive to militant tactics, distrust of promises, and a concern for radical economic improvement.

Various integrationist and separatist movements are now developing, most of them threatening the real or apparent interests of many whites, who now are so actively opposing the pace of integration that they can loosely be called "counter-revolutionary". Between these two contending forces, there is a crisis and a paralysis among the liberal organizations, and behind it all is \*culminated in the Negroes' defiant refusal to participate in a public accommodati

the Federal government encouraging mild concessions and preparing to maintain order. When looked at this way, it seems that a stalemate is liable to continue temporarily and then turn into a polarized and violent disorder ending in a government intervention--without a change in the grim conditions of poverty and exploitation which are the irritant. We could speculate endlessly in this direction, but at a point it becomes fruitless because there is no way to predict reliably what will happen in the next few months.

There is another way to approach the problem which is more manageable because it avoids the problems of such sweeping prediction. This is through classifying various demands which are being made by the movement, and judging, first, the extent to which they might solve problems if they were enacted and second, the effect of these demands on existing or potential alliances with white groups.

The demands seem to fall into four categories.

1. demands to eliminate discrimination or de facto segregation. These traditional and worthwhile demands would rectify a discriminatory situation, and the rectification would materially improve the Negro community. The prominent issues are open housing, fair hiring practices, end of gerrymandered school and voting districts. The major forces behind these demands in the Negro community are persons of middle-class aspirations, who may or may not be militant, for these barriers along prevent their entrance into the mainstream of American life. Lower-class Negroes support these demands with conviction also, but more out of identity with the movement than out of a belief that a basic change would occur if the demands were met. This seems to be supported by much evidence that the lower-class Negro prefers improved schools over integrated schools, and generally improved living conditions over integrated living conditions.

These demands have the full support of the liberal white community, for legal equality and equality of opportunity are part of the liberal ideology. No doubt the ire of the white unemployed, or working class, or voting property holder is sometimes heightened by many of these insistent Negro demands, but there is hardly any infringement of basic interests here.

2. demands which symbolically assert Negro dignity but neither achieve change nor alienate whites very much. Examples of these are the anti-blackface demonstrations in Philadelphia, and for Cleveland school integration (integrated schools in poor white areas continued to segregate students by classroom.)

These issues are pushed often by militant leaders who appeal to the racial bitterness of the Negro community for effective mobilization on further issues, or in some cases, unfortunately, for power without regard to the needs of the Negro community. These demands also receive lower-class Negro support because of the channel which they provide for the vigorous expression of a justifiable anger--but as with the first class of demands, these are not directed towards very much change in the economic conditions of segregated life.

However, the possibility of enraging or alienating liberal, middle-or lower-class whites with these demands is much greater than with the first set. The kind and depth of alienation is very important to consider here. It is not a case of direct economic deprivation being forced on the white, and in that sense it does not create what we tend to think of as permanent alienation. However, the impact on some whites is almost this severe, especially in the

case of school integration. The experiences in Cleveland, where a lower-class Italian mob intimidated a CORE demonstration out of their neighborhood (over a question which quite clearly should be resolved on the side of the Negroes), and in New York where thousands of middle, lower-middle, and lower-class parents, without much visible coordination, gathered to protest the "pairing" of schools, demonstrate the immediate significance of this question. What is behind this "counter-revolutionary" response? All of the parents are in some sense racist, and this is one of the few occasions forcing a public declaration of their feelings--this is part of it. But the very fact that the racism was not so manifest before this might indicate that it is a feeling of secondary importance to the white person. What seems to bring it into primary prominence is the feeling that the proposed integration will destroy the "quality" of the school and prevent their youngsters from getting the education necessary to fit into the highly-skilled professions, those being the few left today which are at all secure. Is this a realistic fear? If it is, then this issue might create permanent alienation because, next to personal livelihood, the destruction of a son or daughter's future is perhaps the most serious threat which can be made to a parent. But on the other hand, if the fear of the white parent is not realistic, then the alienation probably can be overcome. We are inclined to think that the fears are very unrealistic. American education is responsive often to local parents' pressures, and "forced" integration probably will be coupled with the improvement of educational conditions for both black and white children. In addition, it is unlikely that there will be very extensive joint racial attendance at schools of the poorest ghetto groups and the white upper-middle classes because of their geographical and jurisdictional separation. As for the integration of lower and lower-middle class groups, the threat of integration is likely to lead to either 1) the evacuation of the white groups from the area, if they are financially able, or 2) the actual integration of the whole neighborhood, with the resulting great potential for seeing common problems. In either case, there is not a serious long-term threat of severe alienation of the white community no matter how militantly the Negro movement presses the issue. Our tentative conclusion is that despite the initial antagonisms of the confrontation, there is relatively little danger of permanent alienation. But there is little direct social change either, since the fundamental need is for more and better education. The positive gains lie in the stir and pressure for change created in the various white communities, and the greater militance and grass-roots community focus of the Negro movement.

3. demands which are specifically racial, do not achieve very much, and potentially alienate large numbers of whites. The clearest and most prominent example of this kind of demand is that of replacing white workers with black ones in a situation of chronic unemployment. Sometimes there is inarticulate anger behind this demand, and sometimes there is a complicated theory of change. Usually the theory is that a violent clash over scarce employment opportunities liberates the Negro from self-doubt, makes alliances possible and forces the middle and upper classes to act decisively to improve the economic and racial situation of the country.

Other issues of this kind are less clear-cut. The demand for a white student to lower his immediate educational chances by being bussed to a deprived Negro school might fall in this category instead of the second one, as we suggested before. So might the moving of a Negro into an economically-insecure white neighborhood, although a violent white lower-class status reaction in these circumstances is not likely to be permanently alienating.

Even the demand for fair employment sometimes might create alienating consequences, especially when it is seen as whites giving up jobs to fulfill Negro desires, or splitting the pie evenly. In small cities like Chester, Pa., where communications are relatively good between various groups, the idea that a job given to a Negro is a job taken from a white is quite obvious and unacceptable to all. In a larger city, however, this humanism is missing, perhaps because of the anonymity of the metropolis and, in addition, the rude fact that there just are not enough jobs for everyone is much more difficult to see. Thus, the tendency to push harder and more vigorously for fair employment in the great industrial centers might be interpreted by unemployed or working whites as the encroachment of equal opportunity to compete for already scarce income. The growth of unemployment might be perceived as a by-product of racial encroachment more than as a failure of the national economy. Where unemployment is not so chronic as to convince everyone of its central importance in their problems, and yet severe enough to make one race threaten the other, tensions might be highest. At a certain point, the question whether unemployment should be a "fair" situation for everyone could become less important than the question of how everyone can fight together for full employment. In many northern cities we now face this delicate and potentially-creative balance of feelings. (A part of this issue is what relation the Negro movement and the labor movement will have. Under increasing pressure from Negroes, the labor movement might decide to face squarely the problems of automation and stagnation, or they might see themselves as part of the privileged industrial elite fighting down the challengers.)

As we approach the end of legal discrimination in this country, we can expect the movement to debate--often with bitterness--the value in making this kind of demand for racial economic change as opposed to the demand for class economic change. The race-centered demand, which is the more alienating of the two, can find broad Negro support today although the new middle-class leadership will be pushing it the hardest. We should note the occasional unwillingness of the lower-class Negro, at least in Cambridge and Chester, to make demands that the white lose his job or that a white child lose his education, even when proposed by the militant leadership. These reflect some of the class differences within the Negro movement.

It is quite unreasonable, however, to expect that the Negro movement always will want to avoid alienating demands. Those who believe in the potential of an interracial movement, however, should be concerned with the dangers in this kind of demand and consider arguing against it, perhaps even at the risk of losing their voice in the Negro movement.

4. demands for political and economic changes of substantial benefit to the Negro and white poor. Examples of those include improved housing, lower rents, better schools, full employment, extension of welfare and social security assistance. They are not "Negro issues" per se; rather, they are precisely those issues which should appeal to lower-class whites as well as Negroes. They are difficult demands around which to organize, most probably for two reasons. The first is that they may lack a racial content and therefore might not be easy to shift towards in a movement with a heavy racial emphasis. But this can be overcome, for example, if these demands are linked with racial ones, eg. if the issues of full employment and non-discrimination in hiring are linked. The second, and much more serious reason, is that no such demands can be realized on the community level. New York, for instance, is thoroughly unable to find even the resources needed to improve housing conditions in Harlem even if the city wants to; similarly, Chicago cannot conceivably use

its available resources to fully employ and retrain the Negro unemployed-- and each of these problems is only a fraction of the entire condition of poverty that needs to be attacked in a nationally planned, financed and integrated way. This in absolutely no way negates the importance of raising issues locally which can only be solved by national social change. But it suggests that in the absence of national social change, which is impossible to expect in the short-run, these demands in themselves may not result in the small victories which are required, presumably, if a movement is to keep its spirit. It suggests further that in the near future there might be a need for an organized national agency representative of the common interests of these local protest groups, and able to mobilize and focus pressure that can be felt at national levels.

These difficulties are compounded by a leadership problem. The support for these demands comes most of all from lower-class Negroes and political radicals of all classes, races and occupations. Much of the time the injection of these demands into the existing movement will be opposed by the middle-class leadership which prefers the first three kinds of demands. Such leaders are likely to have everything to gain and nothing to lose by the introduction of such issues.

Some mainstream organizations will shy <sup>away</sup> from this approach on the grounds that conservative support for civil rights will be lost if the issue is joined with proposals for broad new government economic policies. This is to be expected and, although differences need not be inflamed, they should be recognized as real since such new policies are needed. At any rate, nearly all the liberal institutions will go along in rhetoric with such demands, but few will follow-up with a massive action program to make rhetoric reality. The Negro movement, where it believes in these demands, is usually more committed to a mass movement than the sympathetic but lethargic white-led organizations. This failure of the liberal-left to come through with a total commitment to all the discomfort of a political crusade is another cause of the present lack of support for these demands in the Negro movement. Why should the Negroes, crushed as they are with a very specific form of exploitation, be called on to create a general social program and then wait for the whites to organize? Part of our whole crisis so far is that the white person has nothing specific to point towards when the Negro asks for proof that an interracial movement is possible. This is partly the reason for the importance of our present work in Chicago and Appalachia which involves white unemployed people. But it is important to remember that even if lower-class whites suddenly materialized as a mass movement looking for Negro allies in the struggle for dignity, there would be--and there are even when the question is raised today--immense difficulties rooted in the possible threat to certain Negro leaders. One SFFC staff member from Mississippi, in a recent Atlanta meeting, suggested that the "dream" of a Southern neo-populist movement would be a direct threat to the Negro organization to the extent that the organization is a means of finding and expressing a Negro identity.

Before taking up these questions of interracial relations, the prior question is: what do we know or believe about the possibilities of organizing with the other ethnic minorities and the white poor? Any discussion of a movement of the poor is incomplete and utopian without such an appraisal.

## II. The Possible Allies of the Negro Movement

Economic deprivation is not an experience peculiar to the Negro in America. It is a class experience which cannot be overcome by a single race. Thus any

potential allies of an economically-oriented Negro movement will be found in the class affected by this phenomenon. The essential class unity of this group must not be overlooked: any united movement must stress this, the only common ground which all members of the group share. Their common consciousness of poverty and economic superfluosity will ultimately have to bring them together.

However, at this stage, when only the Negroes are conscious of the possibility for real change, and when no more than rumblings are heard elsewhere, a general call to the depressed groups in society is not likely to have much success. The problem of deprivation is felt differently by countless groups, the major dividing characteristics being ethnic identity, age, place, and occupational status.

### Ethnic Groups

Apart from the Negro, the other distinct ethnic groups are the Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans and Mexicans, and the communities of southern- and eastern-Europeans in the large cities.

Puerto Ricans already show signs of willingness to ally directly with the Negro movement. They are found in large numbers in the industrial cities of the northeast, contiguous to or actually in the Negro downtown ghetto. The largest of these Puerto Rican communities, in New York City, joined the first city-wide school boycott in February, 1964 (although not the second), and are participating extensively in the rent strike there.

A number of problems exist, however. If the Puerto Ricans are conceived as appendages to the Negro movement, then all the explicitly racial aspects of the Negro movement will tend to alienate many Puerto Ricans. Any union of the groups is most certainly not possible through a racial appeal. The boycott in New York was around integration as well as quality of education, but since that time a greater Puerto Rican separateness has evolved and seems to suggest one difficulty of an immediate merger.

However, the contacts between the groups will naturally remain large, and probably expand. The Puerto Rican and Negro leadership in the rent strike in New York City works in close alliance. The values of cooperation are great for both groups: Aside from the major argument of strength in unity, Puerto Ricans have a great deal to gain from the experience of the Negro movement; and Negroes can see real, rather than rhetorical, possibilities for an alliance on economic issues which can be quite impelling. A good example of this sense of mutual benefit in operation occurred in the first meeting of Negroes and Puerto Ricans in Chester: after a session in which many Puerto Ricans were upset about the possible dangers and consequences of action, a Negro woman approached a student who was trying to lead the discussion, and told her not to worry: "These people have never had anyone try to help them before; you have to be patient".

But even without the complications of Negro-Puerto Rican relationships, certain other factors mitigate against successful organization of this group. They are on the whole a much more transitory group, especially in the smaller cities: if things are not going well, they move back to Puerto Rico, or to another city. Six thousand Puerto Ricans lived in the Chester ghetto four years ago, at the time of the first major in-migration. Today there are less than 1,000. Even if this is not the case everywhere, the psychological presence of the island homeland and the possibility of return may make an all-out movement for change less appealing than for an American Negro who doubts that moving out is a real alternative for large numbers. Another problem is that

although color and class consciousness exist among Puerto Ricans, there is not yet a widespread consciousness of the need for struggle as there now is in virtually all sections of the Negro community.

However, we might speculate that the deepening of economic slump; the inadequacy and betrayal of alleged pro-Puerto Rican organizations such as the International Ladies Garment Workers Union; and the inviting example of the Negro revolution, are the conditions leading to a further upsurge of Puerto Rican activity, and at least a working alliance, if not always a close and happy one, with the Negro organizations.

For the summer, groups in every city in the east should take note of the Puerto Rican community. The economic status of these groups is usually abominable, and housing, welfare, jobs and schools are all potential burning issues. The impetus of change stemming from the New York successes and from any local offers of assistance could be enough to develop movements elsewhere. And since highly developed internal community organization already exists in many places, the problem of finding and stimulating leadership to take the initiative is probably minimal. Especially along the New York-New Jersey-Philadelphia-Baltimore-Washington coastline, the possibility of greater Puerto Rican action should be explored.

Mexicans provide a comparable minority in size. Those in the cities of the Midwest, specially Chicago, are in a position analagous to that of the Puerto Ricans in the east, and the problems are similar to those of the Puerto Ricans. A second group has resided for longer periods of time in the southwest from Texas to California. Important work has been done to forge an alliance between these Mexican-Americans and other groups. Easily the most promising example is the Texas Democratic Coalition, which is a voter registration and political organization unifying Mexican, Negro, labor and liberal forces across the state. However, the stable residence patterns of Mexican majorities, as in Crystal City where last year the "white power structure" was utterly deposed; the lack of political representation in Texas for such a large minority; and the cruel forms of direct exploitation in west Texas, might make the Coalition idea less applicable to the Mexican problem in the North. Where the idea might be extended, however, is further to the West--for instance, to San Diego and Los Angeles, where the crisis of Negro and Mexican poverty can converge along with increasing lay-offs and job insecurity in the aerospace industries which are organized by the International Association of Machinists and the United Auto Workers. It should be high-priority for SDS to find the people and resources to begin organizing in this southern California area. We already have excellent informal offers of assistance from political and union leaders there and should consider taking this up as a major organizing campaign.

(We know too little about the half-million American Indians, a third non-white ethnic group, to say anything about organizing possibilities. But members of the Madison chapter already are beginning to make contact with Indian communities in northern Wisconsin, and the news of recent civil disobedience demonstrations by Indians in the Northwest, along the lines of Negro protest, is greatly encouraging.)

All these ethnic groups share with the Negroes a key position in American society: they are segregated, separated and exploited. For as long as they have

been in the "land of opportunity," this has been the case. The other generations of migrants, organized labor and the midwestern farmers were all dealt into the more protected lower-echelons of the establishment in the Twenties, Thirties and Forties. The crisis today rests largely on the fact that the orthodox manner of dealing people in, even if all white Americans ceased their racism, is disappearing as automation cuts into the mass production centers of the economy. The very segregation of the colored ethnic groups, however, has led to problems concerning the prospect for alliances. Differences, often divisive ones, exist between the Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and Indians. But it seems possible to bridge many of the differences which impede a political alliance, especially as the peril of slump and the promise of a movement become more sharply counterposed. But whether ethnic-centered demands will be accompanied by demands for general economic change does not depend solely on the existence of a long-term slump or the spontaneous development of a new consciousness. It depends also on organizing experiments which we have not begun.

Of groups in the urban North which might be directly antagonistic to the Negro movement, we must mention the eastern and southern Europeans, who are in the anxious lower sector of the establishment. A number recently immigrated here, especially after the 1945-48 transformation of eastern Europe, but the vast majority stem from the immigration waves of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were the manual labor of the early industrial revolution in America, and were part of the industrial union movement. As a consequence, today they are mostly manual laborers in highly-paid industrial sectors. They form a large part of the group of Americans who are lower-class in status but middle-class in income.

Often they remain in the center of the industrial cities, however, and now are often contiguous to the expanding Negro ghettos. They should not be seen primarily as a constituent of the American poor, however, but rather as a group which finds itself defending its position. They are threatened by automation, which is striking hard at the jobs the old ethnic minorities possess. But they are threatened also by the Negro movement in a number of ways. Their children are more likely than the Negro children to win the few jobs which will be remaining in the production sector of the economy--the artisan, craft, service and new technical fields. This is due, of course, to their being white and having some money. But the point is that the Negro demand for decent jobs threatens many of these groups directly. In addition, the "encroachment" of the Negro on the border of their territory is threatening. They struggled for a long time to arrive where they are and the increasing proximity of the Negro threatens their new-bourgeois position. Still further, although their schools are not much better in quality than Negro schools, education remains their key to the highly-paid jobs, and is seen with great protectiveness. The attacks of Negro pickets by Italians in Cleveland during the January school crisis is probably a classic example of this phenomenon.

These groups remain tightly-knit cultural centers, and have not been integrated completely into American society. They have been the centers of machine politics and the underworld. They have a well-developed system of mutual assistance and defense, and the violence of their response to the attack on their community's integrity may simply be a function of their need for this security. The breakdown of the neighborhood is especially a threat to them.

The conclusion we draw is that this group will play a reactionary role in the impending economic crisis. Unless they are hard hit by automation and can be organized around their employment status, it is difficult to see how outright conflict can be averted. The possibility of organizing them as ethnic groups around ethnic issues (such as the establishment of cultural centers) seems of no relevance to a coalition of forces demanding economic improvement.

The size and growth pattern of these ethnic populations is not known and should be researched. They exist in great number in West Cleveland, and the summer project includes Portuguese and Greek communities. In Chester, where the worst Negro ghetto is contiguous to a Polish section, tentative attempts to probe the reactions of this group have been inconclusive. In Chicago, census tracts show that some of the largest concentrations of white poverty are in these ethnic ghettos. A series of surveys and experiments are likely to produce much more accurate information on the response of these groups to a program of general economic improvement, and we might find new approaches to them also. Otherwise, they loom as a serious immediate block to our movement.

### Age groups

Age is another major factor in a discussion of potential members of our coalition, because America is organized to discomfort both its young and its old.

Some groups were either left out of, or arrived too late to partake in, the great establishment formed at the height of America's economic strength, and today they are undercut further by automation. This is precisely the case with the youth of America: they "arrived" in the labor force too late to fit in.

Among the hardest hit in the whole society is the young Negro. The insurgence of a demand for equality combined with his increased economic superfluosity in the South leads to rapid migration North. This rate reached 50% for Mississippi Negroes in the 5-24 age group in the 1950-60 decade. Thus the youth's chances of getting work in the depressed center-cities of the North is even less than if he were older.

But, disregarding the race factor, the rate of unemployment for all high school dropouts and those who do not continue their education beyond high school is more than double the national figure. They are entering a labor force without the skills necessary for a high paying job, but lack of education is not the major problem. Although it is true that any one youth can increase his chances for getting a job by acquiring a needed skill, the total number of unemployed will not decrease significantly if the level of education is raised.

The choice for the non-college youth is difficult: He must either break into the limited market for skilled labor, take a low-paying, insecure job in the service field, or fit into some niche that is open to him. The need for skilled labor remains, of course: traditional artisans (chefs, jewelers) are not threatened by automation, and the normal openings remain; through family contacts, the crafts (carpentry, plumbing, printing) absorbs a small group. Those who are lucky can acquire the skills necessary for our new automated society (the electronics specialists, machine operators.)

For the most part, however, especially in groups with any initial disadvantages (race, lower-income, residence in depressed areas) the chances are that they will not get a secure, high-paying job. The four dollars an hour industrial jobs which their fathers have are disappearing rapidly, industry by industry. Even in the most

successful union settlements in automation-threatened industries, the best the union can get is a guarantee not to fire anyone; the IAW contract on the West Coast last year is an example of a progressive union which realized that on a local or even industry-wide basis, this was the best they could do. Other unions, such as the United Mine Workers, have agreed to permit automation to proceed more rapidly, worrying only about those who maintain their jobs. In either case, the opportunities for youths entering the labor market are cut off completely.

Unless there is some niche (a job with a family firm, the opportunity to start a new business), chances are the youth will end up in a low-paying service job. Sales clerks, office-boys, managers of small retail stores and public accommodations are all unorganized, and wages rarely are more than the minimum required by law. Aside from the fact that \$1.25 an hour is not enough to support a family in urban life, the crisis becomes more acute because of the standard of living which these youths are used to enjoying. Factory workers can afford to raise a medium-size family in a middle-class area, but their sons will not be able to.

Thus a large group of what Labor Secretary Wirtz calls "outlaws," the unemployed, or highly insecure youths facing a closing and formidable labor market, is growing constantly. These are perhaps the most invisible of the invisible poor, however, especially those who do not have some other identifiable characteristic (race, residence in depressed area, etc.). It may be that the government is taking steps to avert a crisis before the group becomes politically vocal, or because of the correlation between crime and unemployed youth. The government program plans for the development of skills and mere labor-intensive work (CCC-type camps). To the extent there is frictional unemployment, the skills program may reduce unemployment, although the ability of the government to carry on such programs successfully is at present seriously in doubt, judging from the slight success of the Manpower Redevelopment program. The camps will reduce youth unemployment slightly, but it is not a permanent solution to the problem, and may in fact heighten young people's consciousness of their common problems, the social and economic origin of such problems (as opposed to seeing it as individual failure), and the magnitude of the problems.

The outlook for the organization of high school students into the movement is very promising. In the Negro community, especially in the South, high school groups exist practically wherever the movement exists. These organizations focus mostly on civil rights direct action or on the acquisition of educational skills, and it is not clear whether the youth can deal with their complex economic problems without an adult movement working with them. Chicago SNCC includes a city-wide system of high school groups, mostly in the Negro schools, who work around the issues of curriculum reform and school boycotts. In Chester and Swarthmore, the Student Political Action Committee developed contacts with white as well as Negro high school students, but the white students are mostly from middle-class homes and so far see themselves as college-bound rather than economically insecure. Somewhat similar patterns are visible in the work of the Detroit

Educational Project with Negro youth in the Harbour neighborhood, and with high school students in suburban areas.

Outside the Negro movement, there is a great deal of concern with the youth by educators, law enforcement officials, and social workers. Each interprets the problems of this group in his own light: the educators see the solution in a wider curriculum to help the student fit the new contours of the labor market; the law enforcement official will solve their problems by strict discipline and keeping them in school; and social workers see them as a product of poverty and broken homes, to be helped through careful understanding. But there has been no attempt to help this group see its own major problem -- its uselessness in an automated society.

One of the priorities in research is to develop methods in working with these youth. They are particularly prone to right-wing and racist appeals, but perhaps must be organized around their own economic insecurities, and only observe later that their own demands coincide with those of Negroes. But broaching the race issue is not the only barrier which must be faced and overcome. The primary problem is finding them. Where this group overlaps with some other poverty category, e.g. race or depressed region, they are among the most vocal. But elsewhere it is likely that their frustrations will not be vocalized. In those cases where their parents are industrial workers making good union wages (and many of them will be from this group, for they most frequently cannot find employment where their parents do), there is no reason why they will subsist off family until they reach an age when they think employment is easy to find. This does not mean that they are not potentially active, but only that, left alone, they will rarely give spontaneous verbalization to their real problems. It means that we must find concentrations of these youth, and after probing into their attitudes toward economics, employment, and race we must find a program which will appeal to them if possible, and fit into our concern for full employment. It seems likely that without a pressing sense of obligation (of the kind that a father who is laid off feels) and a group consciousness, they will not respond immediately to a call for direct action on economic issues. Alternative approaches which seem feasible are to begin organization on a smaller unit around those issues they deem important (social activities, police?), or to tie them into another movement, presumably of white unemployed who have already entered the labor movement. It may be feasible at this point in Chicago to begin to organize groups of high school students, dropouts, and recent graduates without work, attempting either to involve them with the broader full employment movement, or in their own issues.

At the other end of the age spectrum are the elderly. Just as the youth are being cut off from skilled and unskilled labor fields, so are old workers being fired or retired early. Even where this is not the case, many of the employed old people are in great insecurity. The possibilities of obtaining steady employment after the age of 55 are fast disappearing. Retraining for this group is even more futile than with the young. Present medical and financial arrangements

for them are woefully inadequate, and even the best proposed legislation only skirts the problem. To complicate the matter, the growth of suburbia has made more complete the separation of the elderly from the family unit, ending the traditional way which society had solved the problem of the old. No other social institution is being proposed to relieve the insecurity and loneliness, not to mention the poverty, which this group looks forward to.

There exist large concentrations of old people. In the larger cities, they tend to congregate in certain neighborhoods. In the smaller, depressed industrial cities where industry has gone south some years back, only the elderly remain. A similar situation is developing in the rural south, where the migration north by the young people has left them and where they are joined increasingly by retired northern people.

Some successful organization of the elderly is underway. The "60-Now" movement within the UAW for instance, involves thousands of workers, retired and soon-to-be-retired, in demands for greater union benefits to supplement old-age and social-security income. We have an informal request from IUE personnel to work with their retired workers' councils in Boston on the creation of a political organization and program. A social worker in Paterson, New Jersey, assures us that the possibilities of helping to channel the dissatisfaction of old people is very great. However, it must be realized that old people probably are physically, if not psychologically, less able than others to carry on social protest. Unless their life experience has been liberal or radical -- as in the case of some Negro and ex-union older people -- they are not likely to be interested in more than somewhat greater welfare for themselves, a change that could be managed easily by the present power structure. To the extent the system continues to refuse them even this, of course, they have a legitimate, acute and unresolved gripe. It is reasonable to discuss organizing their support for political ends, though the possibility for an alliance with other groups may depend on factors other than age. When resources are available to us, we should establish a pilot project along these lines to test the ability of these citizens to act in concert with the rest of the economic out-groups.

#### Organization by Area

Although the problems of the economy are nationwide, the poverty which results is not spread evenly to every nook and cranny of the country. Those regions and cities which rely on industries now being automated -- such as coal in Appalachia, railroads in Pennsylvania and elsewhere, military equipment on Long Island or on the West Coast -- or from which industries are moving -- textiles and shoes in New England, automobile assembly in Chester or South Bend -- are particularly devastated by poverty.

The depressed areas include:

-- Appalachia, including the southern tier of New York state,

all of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, and Tennessee, western Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina, and northern Alabama. This area suffers from the substitution of the coal industry, the depressed railroads, and general economic malaise. Northern Minnesota and Michigan's Upper Peninsula share this area's depressed mining conditions.

-- The industrial metropolises including practically every major city in the north: Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston, Pittsburgh, Newark, etc; the string of small cities from Wilmington, Delaware to Newark, New Jersey; the north-central areas of Buffalo, Cleveland, Akron, Cincinnati, Dayton, Detroit, and Chicago and much of the West Coast.

-- The depressed agrarian areas: the black belt, stretching from eastern Louisiana across much of Mississippi and Alabama, through central Georgia, most of South Carolina, and south-central Virginia; the eastern shore of Maryland; southern Delaware, south Jersey, and northern New England.

-- Isolated cities and regions which are hit by cancellation of federal contracts, changes in world prices, and other unexpected crises: presently Long Island and upstate New York are representative.

The territorial basis of organization should be carefully considered. Not only are economic conditions varying on the regional, state and municipal level, but political organization may be appropriate on these levels and on the ward and neighborhood level as well. It is clear that solutions to the problems of these areas are only at the national level, however, and it continually must be kept in mind that such organization is strictly a means to exert pressure nationally and gain strength for the movement, end not an end in itself.

Economically, the movement has relied most completely on the city or municipality level in the north. It is the Chester Movement, the New York Rent Strike, and the Chicago school Boycott; to the extent that a greater consciousness has been achieved, it has been in terms of federations of these municipal movements. This is natural, for in the industrial northeast and north central states, the city is the place of great poverty, and cities are not contiguous, and thus lend themselves to separate movements.

Within the city, organization has proceeded on a district and neighborhood level, and where the density is great, in the block and tenement level. It is on these levels that exciting work is being done, not only in more intensive participation in reform movements, but in the development of leadership and discussion which may be the basis for radical thought and participatory democracy. Among the uneducated, the poverty stricken, and the segregated, there is a lack of leadership and administrative ability, and even an ability to focus on issues and verbalize general dissatisfaction. It is also here, however, that there is an absence of vested interests in continued exploitation, and possibly the seed for a different society. After months of

cooperation, the residents of the second ward of Cambridge, Maryland not only discuss basic flaws in the system and verbalize what their economic and social rights are, they also have developed institutions and patterns of behavior which are foreign to middle-class America. They refuse to talk seriously about taking jobs away from white workers as a solution to their unemployment. Many are not taking the now-available surplus food: they say someone who needs it more may not get it if they take it. In Chester, too, women on a march refused to block the school, arguing that stopping a white child's education was not their goal.

The major problem with organization on this level is that while it contains the most opportunity for new values, it is not the locus of decision-making. Only a block cleanup, anti-rat campaign, and at most a rent strike can be organized here with any material changes possible. In Newark, and increasingly in Chester, federations of block organizations are the basis for a city-wide movement, and these may be models for others to follow.

Outside the industrial areas, a regional approach seems more viable. The Black Belt has been the target of voter registration, and the shared problems of Appalachia make it optimum for regional organization.

In translating local insurgency around economic issues into political terms, the same question of location is relevant. On the precinct ward level, the most one can do is publicize issues, and perhaps shake up the machine by destroying traditional patronage channels and even winning a city council election in one or more constituencies. Even on a city-wide level, only limited solutions to problems exist. Majorities within city limits of groups with which we are concerned hardly ever exist; where they do they have no actual power (Washington, D.C.), or are split racially (Cleveland). Direct political action can probably only force others to make concessions in their benefit, and not actually displace the rulers. On the other hand, the destruction of reactionary machines may well lead to urban renewal and some material benefit (although the tax base of those places where poverty exists is usually lower than in richer communities). In addition, the popular frustration created in seeing the inability of the municipality to act to solve basic problems brings on a greater consciousness of the scope and depth of those problems. The election of representatives to state and federal legislatures who are liberal, and at least will not block reform, is a worthy by-product of the movement, especially when it does not destroy the race and class identity of the people.

On the state level, there is a great possibility of effecting reforms through direct and political action. Again, however, those states which contain the largest incidence of poverty are least able to afford such programs as quality education, adequate welfare, and area redevelopment. Little except publicity and some reform can come on this level. However, there are other advantages to state-wide organization. Where there is more than one group affected adversely in the state by economic conditions (as is the case in Pennsylvania: an industrially-depressed southeast, ghost coal towns in the northeast,

Appalachian rural poverty in the center, and unused steel capacity in Pittsburgh) there is great potential for these groups seeing their common problems, and beginning to make sound alliances. In Texas this apparently is already happening with Mexicans, Negroes, labor and liberals.

Ultimately, however, the national level is where political pressures must be directed. This pressure undoubtedly will take many forms: mass demonstrations, independent and reform Democratic candidates, and other activity might well be coordinated by a nationally-representative assembly of the movement. This is a very intricate problem, especially since the Negro movement is at this stage already while its national liberal-labor allies live in impotent desperation below the establishment. How and whether to work out a national political organization is a problem which will require much sensitive exploration in the days ahead.

### Organization by Occupation and Employment Status

The concept of organization by occupation and employment status is basic to this discussion, and is the last major criterion. Our premise is that a movement can be developed among persons whose economic role in the society is marginal or insecure. What groups, then, fall into this category by this criterion?

First, the unemployed present an important potential force. Due to the high levels of unemployment among Negroes, the civil rights movement is growing more militant in its demands and program. It is not at this point a chronic problem for whites, as mentioned earlier, a situation which leads to many of the tensions within the disadvantaged class. However, there are many instances of white unemployment: areas where highly skilled men are being laid off because of military shifts is just one example. And unemployment very definitely is a chronic threat, if not yet a reality, to whites.

The Chicago JOIN project is attempting to organize in a situation which includes these factors, especially the higher amount of Negro than white unemployment, the present relative "normalcy" of white unemployment levels, the growing apprehension among whites about their employment, and some patterns of anti-Negro feeling. An attempt is made to appeal to persons in their common status of unemployment, with organization proceeding simultaneously in different neighborhoods among whites and Negroes. Not surprisingly, Negroes are deeply concerned to do something about the problem. More surprisingly, the whites, though fewer in number, express a real interest in becoming involved in JOIN, and most see racism as a diversionary issue. The advantages of initiating a project with the explicit intention of building interracial unity around the jobs issue are quite obvious: the movement is immediately political, the service-centered aspects of the project do not become more consuming than issues and program, etc.

But one barely-started project does not constitute evidence that the white unemployed want to, or can be, organized, politically. There is good reason to question whether objective conditions (the social-psychology of the unemployed, and the pace of unemployment itself) permit effective organization. Some unemployed whites may be more embarrassed than Negroes by their unemployed status, and see their problems as personal or obscure rather than social and clear. Many are not working because the only jobs they can get

are not lucrative enough to compete with welfare or the other means of obtaining income. Some are too disillusioned by past disappointments. Others are just momentarily unemployed, the rapid turnover and transient nature of this group being one of its characteristics. These feelings are all supported by the fact that the problem is not always chronic and because few institutions express a real concern about it. In addition, many of the unemployed will be hard to find, since they are not registered and receiving unemployment compensation checks.

However, these qualifications by no means apply everywhere, and two growing forces could reduce much of their significance: the first is the expanding rate of unemployment which could become a chronic problem for whites unless drastically new ameliorative policies are enacted. The second is the growing visibility of the unemployment problem and the consequent incentive to see it as an issue on which action can be legitimately taken. Together these trends are likely to create a far greater consciousness and movement by the unemployed themselves. The better unions as well are likely to become involved in the political organization of their unemployed, or the unemployed generally. In this case, organizing work might become easier for us, although new problems of remaining fraternal but independent in relation to the unions would arise. An especially good opportunity for this effort exists on the West Coast, in San Diego as already mentioned, and in Seattle where 10 percent unemployment exists in an unstable defense-based economy.

An even larger group defined by their job status is the mass of employed but economically-insecure persons--heralded in traditional ideology as the true agency of social change, but today a perplexing and divided group.

These often are reactionary people, many trying to consolidate the achievements made during the generations since their families immigrated here. Many in the craft unions, which are organized to defend a single skill in a tightening market situation, are very liable to be racist and conservative. A good example is the building trades unions who, in New York, fought bitterly to preserve their racism and nepotism against the Negro jobs movement. It is doubtful that these unions could be persuaded to support full employment rather than pursue their narrow and futile interests to the end, but it is likely that such persuasion will have to come in the streets as well as at the negotiating tables.

The industrial unions seem more likely to sense the need for progressive economic change, but today they might be tied too deeply to the Democratic Party and private enterprise to be a mass political force campaigning for a transformation to planning and abundance. So long as this is the case, the possibility for alliances between labor's rank-and-file and Negroes or the whole underdog class is jeopardized. Often the unions are fighting for the jobs of those who are working already, and the best they can hope to achieve on an industry-wide scale in the face of automation is an agreement that the machines will proceed no faster than the pace of natural turnover through retirement or quitting. Thus the union local, or any other local institution, cannot do very much by itself: it is modelled to work on a local level around local issues, and the problems it is confronting here are national ones that stretch beyond even their industry. Therefore, even though the rank-and-file is capable of more militance than the union leadership much of the time (as the rising numbers of contract rejections, wildcat strikes, and various attitude surveys indicate), this potential militance may be blocked

indefinitely, rather than drawn out and channeled into political action.

We will be in a sensitive situation in this area, because our immediate identification is with the Negro movement and the problems of the unorganized poor--and these are not the primary and immediate constituents of the American labor movement. We should take up several opportunities for organizing work with the employed union men, however. One need is to attempt building political coalitions in places such as those on the West Coast--but coalitions spurred by the intensity of the Negro movement, not coalitions which compromise the Negro movement for the sake of its less militant allies. Another need is to directly engage in support of strikes where locals request assistance and where we can be of aid, make close contact with the rank-and-filers, and learn the techniques of strike organization. A third need is to participate in union educational programming; it seems possible, for instance, to help develop curricula on social problems to be used in many of the summer and year-round labor institutes and forums. A last need is to be involved directly in the labor movement with others of our persuasion, making an informal "legitimate" radical force pushing for policy and leadership changes, and supporting and pressing the most militant wing of the CIO leadership.

Another potential participant in our coalition is the migrant worker, often described as the worst off and the most exploited of society's poor. Students and some unionists have attempted either labor organization or educational improvement among these poor, never with a great deal of success. Some of the problem seems to be the failure of the AFL-CIO to commit itself seriously enough in the southern California drive, but the problem of organizing in this area runs deeper than the matter of commitment. It may be the case that if the migrant worker were to "win" on the issue of unionization or wage-hikes, the growers would introduce the automatic machinery which they have been holding back while labor exploitation was so cheap. In that case, which we think is probable, the future for the migrant is coming to resemble that of the rural tenant or field hand being replaced by machines. Although there is no sign of a slowing of migration, ultimately the migrants may recognize the lack of opportunity in the cities and will remain where they are, unemployed, or join the welfare rolls in the North as the next best alternative. If they stay south, organizing becomes a separate problem; if they come north, they dissolve into the groups we are discussing.

In summary, there are various open possibilities for organizing among the 50 million or more "non-Negroes" who now are in a state of poverty or economic insecurity. What we know does not point towards anti-Negro or fascist attitudes throughout these groups of the poor, contrary to what some premature defeatists declare. We find a diverse series of situations, but most of them characterized by:

1. the impact of growing economic insecurity.
2. a widespread feeling of alienation and a discouragement with existing economic policies.

Now with an official "war on poverty" there is a chance that the poor will feel a greater common consciousness of the legitimacy of their problems and the inadequacy of government programs. In addition, it is striking to observe that almost no attempts are being made to organize the poor for social change: and no verdict can be reached until a long-term attempt is made.

## Interracial Problems of an Interracial Movement

After this sketchy appraisal of organizational possibilities among various groups of the American poor, the question of an interracial movement must be taken up more directly.

We hope for a movement of all the poor, at a time when the Negro community is creating the only major movement in American society. The problems inherent in this situation are several and sensitive. We realize they will not be settled on paper, but only in actual work. Nevertheless it is critically necessary to state at least what the problems seem to be about.

The first is that in very few instances are any white persons demonstrating a commitment to Negro cause, and in almost no instance is there actual evidence that poor whites can be mobilized. This makes it seem unfair to ask that the Negro movement take up economic issues as well as the directly racial issues which burden it today.

The second is that if whites were mobilized somehow, they would not represent an unambiguous sign of hope to the Negro movement. This is because many Negroes believe, with excellent historical justification, that the whites would dominate the movement and eventually receive the social rewards. This attitude is sharpened by the growing "black" ideologies of the new militant middle-class Negro leadership. These ideologies variously require Negro control of the Negro organizations, Negro staffs in the field, and a program of specific hostility to the whites of all classes. The usual psychological justification for such a program is the need to expunge alleged pent-up hatred of the Negro masses for the white man, either as a way to keep people moving or a way to force action out of white society. Many integrationist ideologies, held by Negroes and whites, agree on the need for Negro control and much of the time on the need for Negro staffs, while opposing the anti-white features of the program wherever it might permanently alienate whites and Negroes who live in the same class circumstances.

The third problem is that the issues are not always conscious matters of debate, but they arise in the form of emotional tensions between people and organizations within the movement.

What are the arguments for an interracial movement?

1. The alternative is more likely to be fascism than freedom. We are not convinced that violent conflict between Negroes and lower-class whites will force the American establishment to even make significant concessions, much less dissolve itself. The establishment might merely ignore the trouble and leave it to the local police, or it might use troops to enforce order. In either case, poor Negroes and poor whites will continue to struggle against each other instead of against the power structure that properly deserves their malice.

2. Since the Negroes are today the most experienced force for change, it is doubtful that they will fall to the rear of a movement of the poor. In generations gone by, the Irish, Italians, Jews and other ethnic minorities rose to the partial security of the establishment through a labor movement

and political machines which subordinated Negroes. That was an unforgiveable action. But the process is not inevitable; it depends on the balance of forces at any one time. Today it seems inconceivable that Negroes would put up with less than a central role in directing the movement. Quite the contrary; would they not have leading roles in an interracial movement if their own action fostered it?

3. The economic problems of the Negro are class problems. They cannot be solved by the elimination of discrimination. The creation of decent housing, education and employment require massive change. No such massive change could improve the poor whites without improving the life of the poor Negro. Some argue that the economic "solution" for the Negroes lies in compensatory treatment, or a "Marshall Plan for Negroes." This is quite true, and should be done, but it cannot compensate for joblessness except with a job--and there will not be enough jobs until there is a political movement that successfully demands them or, alternatively, a guaranteed income, from the government. The private business is not and will not create them.

4. The psychological argument that the Negro must expunge hate is questionable on several grounds. It presumes that hate can be liberated while other feelings, such as kindness or openness, are suppressed, whereas it is doubtful that any such mechanical process exists. But even were the psyche to operate in this way, the strategy of liberating hate begs two questions: first, is it morally justifiable to want to liberate hate alone? and second, after the liberation of hate, how will the living conditions of lower class Negroes improve?

These questions convince us of the need for a loose alliance of some kind, however difficult. In this context, we should approach the problem of the new Negro leaders and black ideologies more directly. We believe that the Negro community should be, and is, the main repository of guidance over the Negro movement. We believe that a racially-integrated staff legitimately should use the criterion of race in tactical and strategic decisions about organizing. We believe that much of the racial tension within the movement is rooted in our initial refusal to decide upon and maintain a staff policy of racial equality. Finally, we believe that the black ideology alone is incapable of leading to improvements in the everyday living conditions of Negro people. It can be one vital way of stirring people into participation, but it cannot eliminate poverty. The elimination of poverty, we think, requires the mobilization of all the power of the 75 or 100 million Americans who suffer it or suffer over it.

This is the same case we would take to the white, for example, in the office of the Chicago project. Although the Chicago situation is quite hopeful so far, we realize it is illusory to expect the instant removal of prejudice among many whites. The whites must be organized on economic issues which are more important than their racial ideology. Perhaps today this is more possible than in the past because it is hard to imagine the poor white improving his economic condition without confronting a Negro movement already involved in many of the same issues. In this situation we think whites would decide to identify with the Negro struggle were it generally parallel to their own. Of course, the whites could opt for prejudice and further poverty--then we all lose. Whether this choice is made, perhaps, depends in large part on the organizational role we play.

This discussion no doubt will continue, and will be painful to us all. It should not become more important to argue than to organize, however, for only in

organizing will the proof be found. So it is organizing we intend to do--too many people are hungry and kept down, and we are mad. The question that remains is how.

### Notes toward a Definition of Our Role

We are left now with the need to ask what the foregoing implies for our political work. By "our" in this context we partly mean SDS and ERAP--this is a working paper on immediate problems we face--and we partly mean any other persons or organizations sharing the concern with racial justice and an end to poverty. Some of what we say, therefore, will be specific to SDS-ERAP, but most of it is intended to apply to the general community active around these issues.

The immediate questions center on our role in the Negro movement; the emerging economic-class movement; the relation this work has to the campus; relations with professionals and the important liberal-left political organizations; the national organizational structure of our movement; and our political program. What follows, it should be stressed, is a set of working notes, not a "blueprint" about which we are confident.

First, Negroes among us should and will continue to work in the Negro community, supporting wholeheartedly all the demands of the movement, stressing a program that includes economic issues, but attempting to avoid programs that lead to the permanent alienation of potential class allies. There also is potentially an important role for Negro organizers among the white poor where we are trying to develop interracial movements and organizations. For instance, Chicago JOIN will involve at some point interracial organizing teams in both the Negro and white neighborhoods and unemployment compensation centers. The effectiveness of this approach is not certain. But it would be impressive and certainly right for a Negro to argue to whites that blacks and whites should adopt the direct action tactics of the Negro movement for the sake of class gains. Some whites certainly should continue working where possible in the Negro movement, loyal to its program, but remaining committed to economic and class problems. The rationale for such work primarily lies in keeping in touch with that movement, and not in trying to change its direction. The contributions which whites, as whites, can make are: (1) trying to show the Negro community that there are whites, especially those without any vested private interest, who are concerned as human beings with Negroes as human beings; (2) helping to make connections between those in the Negro movement who are interested in economic issues and any other segments of American society with similar concerns.

However, many whites should turn their organizing attention to the whites in the Other America. This is by no means as immediately promising as work in the Negro movement; nor is the problem as "legitimate" in the eyes of the middle and upper classes; nor does it hold out the excitement and relationships that the Negro movement does today. But it is the first priority, the task no one else is going to undertake, one of the best contributions to the Negro movement itself.

The student base of our movement must remain solid, and must increase greatly in scope and quality. Our primary concern is not with the immediate value of students to the Negro and economic movements, although students today are among the main catalysts of change. We are concerned also with improving

our quality of work and making opportunities for radical life vocations. Whether students stay in college, or leave to work in the movement, they need constant immersion in the content of at least the social sciences and humanities. Much of this can be accomplished in study groups or conferences connected intimately with the problems of the movement. In addition, students can develop various technical and administrative skills which are invaluable in working with the movement. Finally, the campus chapter or group working in the Other America is a valuable workshop in relating academic endeavors to real human problems, building up an understanding of collective, cooperative leadership, and gaining invaluable experience in politics and organizing. Thus there is an educational need we must constantly meet, and there are ways to meet them within the active fibers of the movement itself. The result of deliberately improving the student base can be the creation, over the next several years, of the independent presence of a new radicalism.

Besides this key group of organizers, we must mention the on-campus groups, the middle-class professional and cultural workmen, and the liberal organizations, as they fit into the organizing work. What should be the relation of the economic movement to these forces? SDS still needs to keep aiming at a broad social movement, with room for moral and aesthetic concerns, work on educational reform, and other activity which argues with the prevailing normative structure of society. However, what we are concerned with here are the specific ways in which these groups fit into the economic movement. An entire paper should be done on this subject; but, again, we mean only to broach it here.

The intellectual groups, first of all, can turn their intellectual resources to the many areas of research which any self-educating and program-centered movement needs. Secondly, they are effective transmitting and recruiting agents in the constant search for new personnel. Third, in their part time, they can be a crucial volunteer force in the movement and in the community--going everything from busy work to helping create the lines of a winning political coalition.

The relationship with the liberal-left community is a problematic one which becomes more pressing now that domestic conflict and activity is becoming widespread. If the unions and religious groups are lumped together into a "liberal establishment," two very important but very inadequate generalizations can be made: (1) that these institutions are not primarily or above all interested in ending poverty and racism, because of the short-run threats to leadership and to organizational stability; (2) however, these are the most interested and committed of all our institutions, and we must find a close but critical relationship to them.

These generalizations disguise the fact that certain unions, certain churches, certain regional organizations, certain chapters, etc., are outstanding in their character and program--and it is through the careful selection and identification of these groups that we will find vital sources of new power and support. It would do no good to catalog these groups here; we have not explored relations sufficiently with them to have a clear working grasp of who within the liberal-left frame today can move with us into a radical coalition. Making these bonds is one of the most important horizontal-organizing responsibilities before us.

In particular, we will find rewarding contacts with individuals or small groups within the institutions who wish to push for a greater allocation of institutional resources towards the basic work we want to do. These individuals therefore are a source of left-stimulation within their institutions and a source of essential support for us. Concretely, the Chicago project was supported directly at first by a tiny handful of trade unionists; now it is viewed much more sympathetically and it is the object of a healthy discussion within many of the liberal-left organizations of Chicago. Through contact with individuals in these large organizations, we gain not only support and the "cover" of legitimacy, but their transmitted wisdom, skills, and experience.

We believe, of course, that nothing less than a wholly new organized political presence in the society is needed to break the problems of poverty and racism, but it must be a force which today explores for many of its allies within the liberal institutions. Only through such a development will the institutions themselves ultimately go through the healthy conflicts that lead toward greater radicalism.

As we sketch, however briefly, this configuration of united or mutually-supportive groups which potentially make up our movement, it becomes clear that SDS and similar groups must consider future organizational forms with great care. It is likely, in the case of SDS, that our traditional campus-related work will suffer increasingly from (1) the weight of the "old guard," (2) the emphasis on national and local political movements at the expense of certain student-centered programs. These dangers can be averted, however, if we are able to discover new organizational forms which permit the natural beginnings of a people-centered, instead of student-centered movement. Each in their own way, many organizations can take practical steps towards these natural beginnings.

For instance in SDS: GRAP and the Peace Research and Education Project could easily become separate but overlapping forms open to students as well as "adults" while still keeping a working connection to an SDS student-centered program. This will permit a greater integration of many persons and groups hitherto "outside" our community because of its student identity.

The SDS national staff, working closely with the ERAP and PREP staffs, would need to continue campus education and action programming, not only on the peace and economic issues, but as well on educational and cultural ones. Structurally, this means SDS would become the student movement tied to ERAP and PREP but also a movement within the student community itself, politicking with the National Student Association, and the major religious and student civil rights groups as well as building the orthodox chapter unit on campuses. Enlarged research and field staffs would be required, of course, for the whole complex of organizations. If from this there eventually flows a more integrated organization, a Movement for a Democratic Society, for example, that will be determined by social and psychological developments that are difficult to predict.

These developments, quite naturally, will involve cooperative relationships and perhaps even mergers with various civil rights, peace, labor, student and other groups, which deeply share our goals. No doubt there will be difficulties in relations with other organizations too, due to political, racial, and other tensions. At present it seems very important that we strengthen our own existing resources (without becoming rigid), rather than engaging in any

any discussion of new horizontal relations with other groups--unless that discussion is about clearly-feasible goals and based on trust.

We must also be prepared to radically change, or even dissolve, our organization if conditions someday favor a broad new movement. As insurgent movements develop on their own around the country, we anticipate the hopeful possibility that realignments will occur leading towards a new national movement. In time there might need to be a representative national framework for all this variety of local insurgency. But that will not be determined by an organizational scheme so much as by unpressured discussion and conscious attempts to find compatible local-insurgent groups which truly need the leverage that national organizations can bring. Our role today is not to "call" for that movement nor to suggest its appropriate organizational forms, but to keep the hope open in our thinking, dialogue, and, most of all, our work.

We deliberately understress ideology in these comments, largely because SDS already has made some viable beginnings in this area but has not begun to deal exhaustively with questions of organizing strategy. However, there are certain "ideological problems" that demand inclusion here.

The first is that in trying to build a broad, open and democratic movement it will be quite difficult to maintain a radical ideology. We want to stress, in a thorough way, the need for democratic participation in a society with a publicly-controlled and planned economy, and which guarantees political freedom, economic and physical security, abundant education, and incentives for wide cultural variety. The initial, but not the only, problem here is that we need a way to keep discussing the problems of goals while we are immersed in day-to-day activity. There is not a natural relationship between tactics and ends-- it must be cultivated in at least the few ways we have mentioned at an earlier point. And with the tremendous influx of staff we expect, it will be difficult to keep that general sense of openness and fraternity needed around the organization as a basis of freely-shared discussion.

We will need also a more detailed and materialistic content to our ideological thinking. It is not enough, of course, to cry out for abundance; we must be able to think fluently about what it would mean in the homes and neighborhoods and cities where people live.

But the harder problem is that we persistently will be troubled at the community level by the variety of "irrelevant" or "dangerous" issues we appear to "smuggle" in to our work. There will be immense pressures, and undoubtedly vicious smear attempts (indeed, they already are beginning), which will create a demand within SDS to modify the program. There is much common sense in this view. It will make a hard life easier within the labor movement, in the community organizations where we work, etc. But if the issues really are inter-related, as we say, then in some sense we have no choice but to confront them as such. The answer would not seem to be in "postponing" the announcement of our deepest value concerns and commitments, since that merely postpones a confrontation and compounds it by making ourselves obviously hypocritical in the eyes of people with whom we are supposedly honest. The possible amelioration of this difficulty, which will be with us indefinitely, perhaps lies in the future of the poverty and racial crises, and within the matter of with whom we work and how. With an examination of these three related phenomena we will bring this long commentary to a close.

There now, of course, is another war on poverty besides our own. It is not a war that will be won, however, because it is not intended to redistribute power and wealth. The Johnson "war" will not create the aggregate demand, nor establish the public planning that is required for a solid onslaught on misery. For example, the new Johnson "camps" may reduce unemployment, but mostly among those who are not counted on the unemployed rolls anyway since they never joined the labor market. Similarly with manpower retraining: the problem is not fundamentally one of readjusting the skills of the work force, although that is needed, so a "solution" along these lines is not likely either. What the "war" will do, or what we should attempt to make it do, is make the problems of poverty visible, dramatic and legitimate to work on; stimulate the poor to further develop a consciousness of their social, rather than individual, plight, and even create the basis for class disgust with the men in Washington.

With civil rights, the crisis also involves a new piece of legislation which is not going to solve the problem, but create the basis for clarifying its deeper nature. Even with our doubts, we believe that over the long run the Negro movement, or the major part of it, will agree that our freedom is chained not only by racism but by economic problems general to men of all color. We very much favor the present civil rights bill to the extent that it secures some greater dignity and because of the chance it presents for wiping out the racist stalemate that delays a confrontation over the poverty that accompanies our plenty.

These issues tend to be converging. But we do not bank on tendencies, or presume that we are an elite waiting for "the masses" to see the Way. We are people and we work with people--only if conscious cooperative practice is our main style will our ideology take on the right details; only then will it be tested and retested, changed, and finally shared with others. There is no guarantee of succeeding no matter what we do. But clearly it is not an ideology that will give us a legitimate and radical place; rather, it is the role we play in the community, as aides in developing a voice and a power among the poor. The manner of this work will be basic to any change in the direction of a new society. The meaningful participation in politics, the moral reconstruction that comes from cooperation in positive work and the forms which evolve in this struggle may be the main social basis for a democratic America.